Details of procurement made in two States during the 2001-2002 Marketing Seasons are given below:—

(in per cent)

State	Commodity	Procured		Total
	FCI	State Govt. Agencies		
Punjab	Wheat	32.03	67.97	100
	Paddy	25.27	74.73	100
Haryana	Wheat	12.98	87.02	100
	Paddy	12.30	87.70	100

The procurement is also made in many other States. FCI, along with the State Governments and their agencies, undertakes procuremet of foodgrains conforming to fair Average Quality Specifications at Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for the Central pool. All the food grains conforming to presecribed specifications offered for sale at specified centers are brought by FCI and State agencies. FCI also collects rice by way of statutory levy on rice millers/dealers. The procurement level in a State depends, *inter alia*, upon the capacity of the State Government and its agencies and the infrastructure available.

In order to ensure, *inter alia*, that the benefit of MSP reaches the farmers, the Government had, in 1997-98, introduced the scheme of Decentralised Procurement. This scheme is now in operation in three States, namely, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. Efforts are being made to encourage other States to adopt the scheme.

Income Support Scheme for Foodgrains

812. SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:
SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA:
SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are keen to get rid itself of the business of food procurement as the present policy benefits only four States;

(b) whether it has suggested to the high powered Committee formulating a long term foodgrains policy, that the present system be replaced with an income support scheme which would benefit nearly 2 crore farmers as against 60 lakhs under the present scheme; and

(c) if so, what are the details of the new schemes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) No, Sir. No concrete proposal in this regard is under consideration of the Government. However, alternative methods of providing income support to the farmers are being examined to ensure that the farmers get the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for their crops.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise in view of reply to (a) above.

Storage and Movement of Essential Commodities

813. SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN:

SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to lift control on storage and movement of essential commodities like wheat, paddy etc; and

(b) if so, the details of the new policy in this regard and what would be its impact on availability and retail prices of these commodities throughtout the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Central Government has issued an Order under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 allowing dealers to freely buy, stock, sell, transport, distribute etc., any quantity in respect of wheat, paddy/rice, coarse grains, sugar, edible oilseeds and edible oils without requiring a permit or license therefor under any order issued under the Act. The Order will take effect after thirty days form the date of its issue(15.2.2002) notwithstanding anything to the contrary in any Order made by a State Government before the commencement of the Order. It is expected that this would enable farmers to get best prices for their produce, achieve price stability and ensure better availability of foodgrains in deficit areas.

Restoration of Rationing System in Kerala

814. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government consider to restore the Uuniversal Rationing System in Kerala;